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NUTRITION COMMITTEE NEWS

For exchange of information on nutrition education and school lunch activities.

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NUTRITION EDUCATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOL PROGRAMS

TEACHING GOOD FOOD SELECTION IN THE CLASSROOM

Tasting Parties Promote Better Nutrition

Developing good food habits by increasing the acceptability of new foods is the idea behind the "tasting parties" held in kindergarten and primary classes in Muncie, Ind. Each week the school nutritionist comes to the classroom to direct the preparation of a different food and every child gets a taste. Scrubbing raw vegetables and fruits and cooking in the portable kitchen brought to the classroom makes the children want to try the new foods they have helped prepare.

The Classroom Teacher is Most Important. Activities that grow out of weekly nutrition lessons are supervised by room teachers. Among activities are field trips to store and dairy, parties for parents or with children from other rooms, stories and playlets about food, and study of where foods come from and how they get to us. In all these experiences pupils and teachers plan together, sometimes with the nutritionist, more often after she has gone.

Children are often effective teachers. They tell their parents about what they have learned and take home copies of recipes used at the "tasting parties" so they can have more than just a taste.

Activities Arouse Interest in Nutrition and the 3 R's

Many people in the school and community assisted fifth graders with their study of nutrition in the Highline Schools, Seattle, Wash. The teacher, mothers, nurse, instructional materials consultant, dietitian, school cook, and business and professional men and women in the area all had a part.

The class first evaluated their daily meals, using the Basic 7 chart to check their own eating habits. A lively discussion of vitamins and minerals developed as they talked about nutritional requirements for the school lunch program. On field trips the children learned how bread is enriched and vitamin D added to milk. A committee went to a dentist to get more facts about proper care of teeth. The dietitian gave a demonstration on vegetable cookery methods which best retain vitamins and minerals. The dairy council provided a white rat experiment which dramatically showed the effects of a balanced vs. an unbalanced diet.

As a climax to their work on nutrition, these fifth graders planned a mothers' lunch. They chose the recipes, figured quantities of food needed, shopped, and prepared the lunch. The children's pride in their ability to use arithmetic in expanding recipes and staying within a food budget showed mothers how the 3 R's can be taught in a true-to-life situation.

EDUCATORS SELECTED THE STORIES

Specialists of the Office of Education concerned with home economics and health education have prepared this issue of NCN. They tell about various types of nutrition education activities that have been carried on successfully in elementary, secondary, and adult school programs.

Four common elements have guided many of these programs to success. (1) Programs were based on need. (2) Program planning was often a cooperative venture including teachers and pupils, and frequently school administrators, community leaders, and parents as well. (3) Good understanding of how people learn and what motivates them to improve their living

was characteristic of the program planners. (4) Continuous evaluation went on during the programs.

The stories illustrate 3 of the 10 points in the nutrition program presented in the March-April 1954 issue of NCN: Point 5. *Teach the "how" and "why" of food selection for good nutrition from kindergarten through college.* Point 6. *Discover ways of making the school meal experience more educational.* Point 8. *Use mass media and group approaches to give better understanding of scientific nutrition, to combat food fads and nutrition misinformation, and to help overweights and underweights with their nutrition problems.*

Many Approaches to Nutrition Improvement

In the Pickins Mill (S.C.) School, teachers use many kinds of experiences to teach health and nutrition. Each grade has its own garden plot and pupils raise beans, tomatoes, greens, onions, lettuce, and flowers for use in the school lunchroom. Surplus vegetables are canned in the school kitchen or sold to parents.

Teachers discuss the school lunch menus each day with the children and encourage them to ask questions which may become topics for class projects. English classes write stories about food, make reports on trips to dairy or other food stores, and write out menus for the day. Pupils bring "health news" for current events periods. Arithmetic in all the grades offers a chance to work problems related to such things as food costs and recipes. Arranging flowers for use in the lunchroom on special days is part of the study of art.

Good eating habits are related to breakfast as well as lunch, as some children eat a school breakfast daily. Breakfast has been a regular part of the school health program for about 9 years.

Homemaking Teachers Assist in Elementary Schools

In the past year the Maine State Nutrition Committee has put considerable emphasis on the need for more effective nutrition education in elementary schools. In a letter to all home economics teachers early in 1954, Mrs. Louise Fetting, Director of Home Economics Education in the State Department of Education, made these comments regarding participation of homemaking teachers in local nutrition education programs:

... As a group of professional people, certainly we are interested in helping to improve the eating habits of *all* children ... This is an important service that you might render to your community if you are requested to do so.

A home economics teacher's participation might include such activities as the following:

1. Teaching basic nutrition to elementary teachers in service.
2. Collaborating with elementary teachers in the preparation of material that would be helpful in teaching nutrition to children.
3. Serving as a resource person at any local workshop or conference on nutrition education ...
4. Preparing a bibliography of current teaching materials for use by elementary teachers ...

I am confident that you will want to have a share in any concerted effort to improve the nutritional status of Maine children.

Followup of Statewide Nutrition Education Meeting

Following up the statewide meeting on nutrition education sponsored by the Connecticut Nutrition Council (Nutrition Committee News, May-June 1954), emphasis has been on improving nutrition at all levels of the school program. Elementary school children have been interested in new foods by preparing snacks of vegetables or fruits in their classrooms. Milk avoiders have learned to like milk better by serving it to each other at midmorning. Daily checks have resulted in better breakfast habits, and participation in planning school lunch menus has increased interest in eating a good lunch.

Fractions come alive for some pupils in the intermediate grades as they measure milk and flour for the making of muffins or other simple foods. Nutritive values found in common foods are learned through experiments and animal-feeding projects in science classes. Studying approved ways of handling food has also interested pupils in improving their food practices.

At the secondary level, teachers of agriculture, science, homemaking, and health have been looking together at their various contributions to the whole area of nutrition education. The State Department of Education has emphasized the need for such cooperative efforts.

Ninth Graders Teach Kindergarten Children

A project of the Greenhills, Ohio, ninth grade home economics class consisted of (1) learning about the nutritional value of vegetables and (2) teaching younger children about vegetables. Each of 12 home economics students chose one vegetable for thorough study. In addition to doing research on the nutritive value of a vegetable of her choice, its contributions to the diet, and its use in recipes and as garnishes, each girl painted a large-scale picture of the vegetable. All the "vegetables" were combined into a large mobile which was hung in the kindergarten room when the girls began teaching the children what they had learned. The children were excited when they saw the mobile floating in the air and heard the home economics girls tell interesting facts about the vegetables.

Wide Participation Expedites a Nutrition Program

Cooks and Teachers Cooperate. School lunch cooks and classroom teachers work together to make the most of nutritional and educational aspects of school lunches in Nevada. In 1954 fall workshops for cooks were scheduled to coincide with district teachers' meetings so that cooks and teachers

might have some sessions together. Discussions on "Eating Habits of Children" and "School Lunch as a Link to Learning" highlighted the meetings.

Pupils participate. Nevada schools involve the children in their school lunch activities. Last summer an Indian Reservation school had a garden project. In the fall the vegetables seemed to taste better to the children for they had shared in growing them. In one school, children took turns asking parents to lunch. School lunch cooks, teachers, and children worked together on the project. In another school each class toured the school lunch facilities. Unfamiliar equipment was explained as were steps taken to keep food and lunchroom clean, sanitary, and attractive.

Vocational Homemaking Teachers Stress Nutrition. All vocational homemaking teachers in the State participated in a workshop on teaching foods and nutrition held on the University of Nevada campus August 23-27. Teachers worked on resource materials for use at the early-, middle-, and later-adolescent levels. Some of the features of the units drawn up at this workshop were: Teaching nutrition through planning meals for a day using the Basic 7, use of self-evaluation devices to judge a day's menus, and consideration of nutritional needs and food preferences of the entire family in planning meals.

MAKING THE SCHOOL MEAL MORE EDUCATIONAL

Menu Planning is Everybody's Business

Credit for the successful school lunch program at Spencer Central School (N. Y.) is largely due to the student menu-planning board, according to cafeteria personnel and administrators who have been working together since 1948. They comment that schools commonly use student representatives in Government and athletic programs, but often hesitate to apply the principle to school lunch. They believe that having students help with planning the meals they are to eat is an excellent way to learn community food patterns, find out likes and dislikes, introduce new foods, and cut waste. Besides, such cooperation helps create a good feeling toward the lunch program.

The Menu-Planning Board. A boy and a girl from each homeroom of grades 7 through 12 are elected to a menu-planning board when other class officers are chosen. The last week of each month board members meet with the head cook and cafeteria manager to build menus for the coming month. Joining this core group is one representative from each of grades 3 through 6, who brings to the meeting a menu which his class has planned with their own teacher.

Board members act as liaison between the student body and the cafeteria as they report to their classmates, both formally and informally. Critics of the plan say the young people will be extravagant and unreasonable. "This may happen at first or with some members," say Spencer leaders, "but soon changes when students begin to work with the real problems of the program. The important fact is that students are getting a chance to learn good nutrition in a practical situation. They spread this information to their friends and families."

The Lunch Program Coordinator. The coordinating force in the Spencer school lunch program is the experienced homemaking teacher who supervises the lunch program and has time set aside to work with students, teachers, and parents. The Board of Education has seen the advisability of having someone on the faculty who is trained, is interested in the job, and has time to do it.

Efforts to Develop Good Food Habits. By eating with groups of students, teachers learn to know the students and find out about their eating practices. Serving-sizes depend on the child. "Taster" portions are given when a dislike is expressed or a new food introduced. Sufficient time is allowed so that pupils can eat without feeling hurried. Menus provide the widest variety practical. Main dishes are not repeated during any one month. Both a vegetable and a fruit are served at each meal.

Relating School Lunch and Home Meals

In the North Syracuse (N.Y.) Central School lunch menus are posted weekly in classrooms and are discussed by teacher and pupils.

Each week's menus are published in two local newspapers. A flyer giving menus for next week, a description of the "new food of the week," and a brief article on some aspect of the lunch program is sent home with each child. The article may be written by the school lunch director, the school nurse, a teacher, a principal, some other school person, or leaders in a parent group. A typical article by the school nurse follows:

The school lunch program is an integral part of the school health program. The children look forward to a well-planned meal which is attractively served in a pleasant environment. Health habits established in childhood carry over into adult life. The effort made to develop an interest in food and its relationship to health is sure to be reflected in health and happiness in the future.

It is hoped that copies of the menus will enable mothers to so plan family breakfasts and evening meals that each child will get the basic food requirements as well as variety each day.

As in other areas of the school health program, we aim to supplement the efforts of the parents in promoting a program of maximum health for each child.

Better Health Through Better Food

Many students in an Arkansas District School appeared to be getting too little of the kinds of food important for growing children. This was 16 years ago. Believing that she could not inspire children to learn on empty stomachs, the teacher began teaching about the essential foods for health and brought gallons of milk from her own home to supplement the meager lunches carried by the children.

When the school lunch program was initiated under the Surplus Commodity Program, the school personnel with the cooperation of the local PTA participated, even though all food preparation had to be done in the classroom by the teacher and pupils.

It was a dark day for the school when the Health Department said lunches could not be served because the school did not have water under pressure, a separate room for food preparation, or sanitary facilities for dish washing. The community rose to the occasion, and through cooperative efforts of PTA members an old school building was moved 7 miles and made into a lunch room.

Today in this school's classroom, healthy children of some of its first pupils to have school lunches, study about foods, help plan balanced menus for school lunches, keep records, and evaluate the food served. The program has become so much a part of the community that mothers come to school for recipes and ideas for family meals at home.

USING THE CLASSROOM TO HELP OVERWEIGHTS

It Takes the Educator, Doctor, Psychiatrist, and Nutritionist

The Topeka (Kans.) Night School offered two classes in "Reducing by Diet" in the fall of 1954. Cosponsored by the Night School, the Shawnee County Medical Society, the State Department of Vocational Education, and the Topeka Dietetic Association, the course emphasized how to lower caloric intake and at the same time improve one's nutritional status. Adults enrolled only with their doctors' written permission and progress reports were furnished doctors bimonthly.

The course was designed to give class members a better understanding of fad diets, drugs, and products that claim to produce weight loss; exercise and its relation to reducing; good nutrition and the calories and nutritive values in commonly served foods; and the use of noncaloric sweeteners.

Classes were taught by Mrs. Bernard Evanhoe, a home economist. Outside instructors included a nutritionist from the Topeka Dairy Council who discussed use of dairy products in low-calorie diets, a dietitian who conducted a questions-on-diets session, a psychiatrist from the Menninger Foundation who talked about emotional problems of obesity, and a specialist on internal medicine who discussed "How to Stay Reduced."

"Take Off Pounds Safely"

Interested adults in Morehead, Ky., are losing weight in an unusual nutrition education class. The class is open to anyone over 16 and last winter's sessions were attended by 78 men and women, while 200 received materials made available to class members. The group organized themselves into a Take Off Pounds Safely (TOPS) Club. Each member has a "pal" who encourages him to stick to his plan for reaching his goal.

This adult class, a part of the vocational homemaking education program offered in Kentucky high schools, is sponsored by the State Bureau of Vocational Education and the local school board with the assistance of the State Department of Health.

Techniques of teaching and devices used have included films and filmstrips on weight control, heart disease, and ways to use low-calorie foods; speakers including a doctor, a psychologist, and a State representative of the Heart Association; discussions and demonstrations on ways to serve low-calorie foods; bulletin board displays of ideas for food selection; folk dancing for exercise and fun; demonstrations of special figure control exercises; check sheets, rating scales, and score cards for recording progress; and distribution of Government bulletins and other materials.

A unique feature of the program has been the incentives offered by local merchants to members reaching certain weight goals within a set time. Examples of awards to women for each size lost or a 5-pound weight loss are: 15 percent reduction on a dress; material for a skirt; or zipper, pattern, and thread for the construction of a garment.

The instructor, a teacher educator and supervising teacher of vocational home economics in Rowan County and the Morehead State College, credits much of the program's success to the example she set by losing 30 pounds and getting down to her normal weight 6 months before the class began.